



Ask Now Texas

Virtual Reference Service

Quick Poll!

Have you heard of Ask Now Texas before?

- Yes
- No

Overview

- History
- Mission
- Hours
- Volunteers
- Software

History

- Started as a service for Western Texas College in March 2007
- Expanded to other libraries, at first other community colleges and libraries in the west Texas area
- Has served a number of public, university and community college libraries over the years
- Open to any interested Texas library

Special Cases

- Some libraries use it only for certain hours
- Some libraries have used it for awhile then used the activity to justify purchasing other software
- Some libraries, especially K-12 school libraries have restrictions

Quick Poll!

- What type of library do you work at or have worked at recently?
- Public
- Academic
- School-Special
- Other

Volunteer Recruitment

- Recruit from:
 - University of Texas at Austin
 - Texas Woman's University
 - University of North Texas
 - Library community in Texas



Mission



Ask Now Texas strives to:

- Provide dedicated virtual reference to patrons of participating libraries
- Provide virtual reference to libraries that could otherwise not provide this amount of online reference help
- Provide experience for Texas library information graduate students and professional librarians in the state

Hours

- Fall 2012
- Starting Monday, September 17th 2012
- Mondays-Thursdays: 9am-11pm
- Fridays: 9am-5pm
- Saturdays: 9am-5pm
- Sundays: 1pm-11pm

All times Central Standard Time.

Training

- Training online or over the phone
- One-on-One Available
- FAQs
- Training videos

Benefits for Interns

- Real world experience
- Ability to telecommute
- Develop professional skill sets
- Some take on special projects for more experience



Benefits for Libraries

- Volunteers can give full attention to virtual reference patrons
- Look at library web sites with “new eyes”
- Enthusiastic service
- No loss of funds
- Minimal amount of staff time
- Can “test-drive” service
- Have a say in what goes on
- Volunteers can provide basic help and a referral to patron’s library for more complex help



Software

Past

- Meebo Messenger
- Free Power Boards
- Moodle Course Management System
- Jing

Currently

- Zoho Chat
- Wikispaces
- Screencast-o-matic
- Google Docs and Gmail
- Google Voice

Quick Poll!

Chat/IM Software

What IM/chat software have you used for your library?

Meebo

Zoho Chat

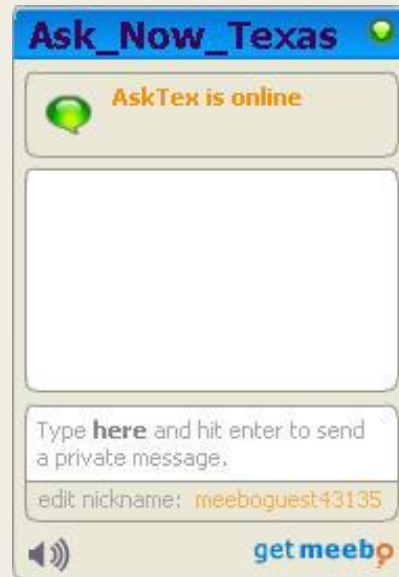
LibraryH3lp

QuestionPoint or RefChatter

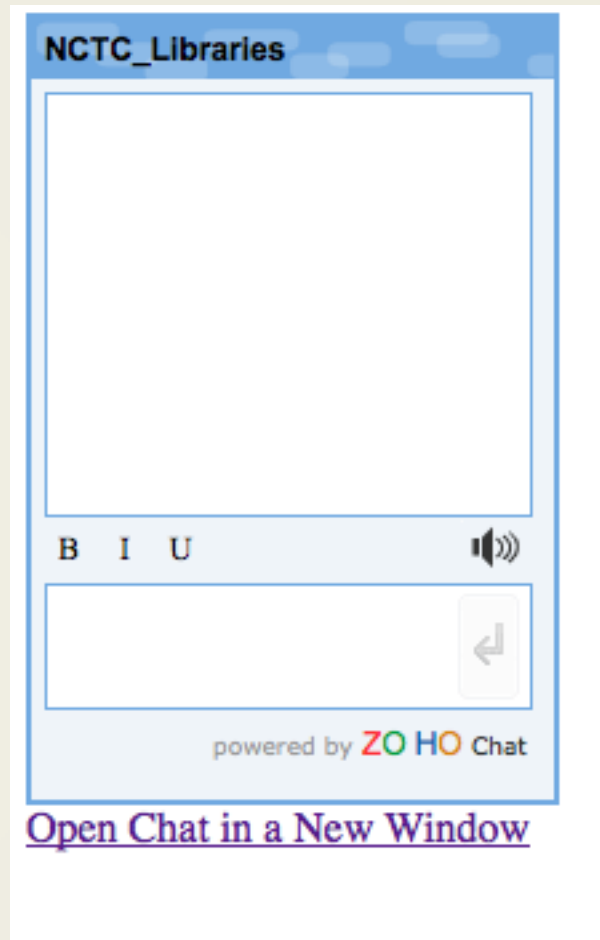
Other

Meebo

- Everybody liked Meebo, but:
- Some disadvantages:
 - Didn't automatically keep chat logs
 - Guests usually anonymous and hard to tell apart—"meeboguest4342321"
 - Hard to know where chat requests were coming from



Zoho Chat



- Take a look: www.zohochat.com

Keeping Logs and Statistics

- Biggest challenge if when doing a program with free/inexpensive software
- Zoho Chat keeping logs will be a big help, probably still do backup
- Keep stats with Google Forms through Google Docs, but that might change as Docs transitions to Google Drive

Google Forms

Virtual Reference Reports

Please fill out this form after each shift.

* Required

Your name *

Please type your first and last name

Date *

Please write today's date in this format: MM/DD/YYYY

Day of Week *

Please select the day

Time of Day *

STC Questions *

How many questions from South Texas College?

PJC Questions *

How many questions from Davis Junior College?

Screen Sharing/Pushing Pages

- Jing
- Screencast-o-matic
- Screenr
- Zoho has a screen sharing tool, but a bit clunky
- This isn't vital but often helpful to give the patron a visual

Quick Poll!

Have you used text message reference for your library?

Yes, with Google Voice

Yes, with Text a Librarian

Yes, with MyInfoQuest

Yes, with another service

No texting service

Texting Through Google Voice

- You can set up a Google Voice number and sync it to a Gmail account
- It will update through Zoho when a text comes in
- You can answer the text through Gmail, no phone required of library staffer
- This is all free for now
- I should be able to set up numbers/emails for different libraries with your own area codes (512, 325, 940, 817, whatever) so it's more personalized
- They should all sync through Zoho Chat

Let's try it out

- I'll text a question to 903-354-4275 (903-354-4ASK) and see what happens. You can try texting a question too.


Types of Questions

- Informational/Directional
- Technology Help
- Research Help
- Totally random...



The Future

- Continue to improve service
- Explore software options because they change quickly
- Use SurveyMonkey or similar survey tool to get more patron feedback
- Work to do ADA testing for visually impaired patrons and others
- Use AnyMeeting or other free meeting software to have online meetings for



future?

Questions?

